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Forty-eighth session

REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE AGENDA OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO MADAGASCAR

Letter dated 9 February 1994 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Madagascar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the forty-eighth session of the Assembly of an additional item of an urgent character entitled "Emergency assistance to Madagascar".

Please find attached, in accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the texts of an explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution.

(Signed) Noël RAKOTONDRAMBOA
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

ANNEX

Explanatory memorandum

1. Madagascar, situated between 12° and 25° latitude south, is particularly prone to tropical cyclones, whose season lasts from November to April. On average, Madagascar and the neighbouring islands are struck each year by seven cyclones; and out of five of the most common trajectories of violent cyclones originating in the Indian Ocean, four strike the country with full force. Since the beginning of the 1993/1994 season, Madagascar has suffered especially hard from the following two cyclones.

2. Daisy, from 13 to 17 January 1994, with an intensity of 5.5° on the Dvorak scale (which goes up to 7), characterized by winds sustained for 10 minutes at a speed exceeding 160 km/h with gusts of 250 km/h, and affecting the provinces of Toamasina, Fianarantsoa and Toliara; and Geralda, from 2 to 4 February 1994, with an intensity of 7° on the Dvorak scale, classified as the most powerful cyclone in the world since 1927, characterized by winds sustained for 10 minutes at a speed exceeding 250 km/h with gusts of 350 km/h, and affecting the provinces of Toamasina, Antananarivo and Toliara.

3. The violent winds, accompanied by torrential and sustained precipitation and rains, resulted in swollen rivers and devastating floods. The situation is described below on the basis of information received to date.

I. VICTIMS

4. The cyclones Daisy and Geralda caused the death of 43 people. Out of 5,423,119 inhabitants directly affected, some 500,000 suffered injury or loss, including 80,000 in the city of Toamasina and 30,000 in the city of Antananarivo. The priority needs of the people affected in terms of foodstuffs, care and shelter largely involve the supply of rice (20,000 tons), flour (10,000 tons), cooking oil (4,000 barrels of 200 litres), powdered milk (500 tons), sugar (500 tons), soap and other essential items, blankets, clothing (for 500,000 people, 60 per cent of them children and 40 per cent adults), vaccines, medicine, rescue equipment, camping equipment, fuel and kerosine.

II. DAMAGE CAUSED TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BUILDINGS

5. The two cyclones damaged or destroyed a large number of public buildings (schools, hospitals, prisons, barracks) and private buildings.

6. The most serious damage occurred on the east coast, where 95 per cent of the dwellings were flattened. The damage has been provisionally estimated at $1,888,000 in respect of the buildings of the Post and Telecommunications and of the Agency for the Safety of Air Navigation in Madagascar and Africa (ASECNA), and the storage installations of the refinery at Toamasina.

III. ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

7. These disasters affected the key sectors of the economic and social life of the country: transport, communications and energy.

8. The main highways connecting the country's principal areas of agricultural production have been damaged or completely destroyed as a result of landslides, floods, and the destruction of bridges and roadworks. The cost of emergency restoration of these highways is put at $1,380,000. The two lines of the Malagasy railway, one of which is vital for the supply of provisions to the capital, have been damaged as a result of landslides, tunnel obstructions and track flooding. Restoration of railway traffic will require $2,650,000.

9. The cyclones disrupted the supply of running water in the three major cities on the east coast and seriously damaged the electric grid in the same region and in several localities on the high plateaux. The emergency repair and restoration work is estimated at $1.7 million. The damage suffered by the telecommunications network (infrastructure and equipment) amounts to $2.4 million.

10. Lastly, the cyclone Geralda seriously damaged industrial installations in the main port city of Toamasina, namely, the factory for PROLUMA lubricating products and the SOLIMA (National Hydrocarbons Corporation) refinery, and the work involved in getting them running again will last three to four months and will cost $800,000.

IV. AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK

11. The losses in these sectors affect 75 per cent of the socio-economic life of Madagascar.

12. The main regions devoted to rice farming and market gardening have been severely hit, either by the direct impact of the cyclones or by the floods: 70 per cent of the paddy-fields are flooded, probably irretrievably. The possibility that the embankment protecting against overflow on the river Ikopa near the capital might rupture aggravates the threat of a shortage of rice, the staple food of the population. The price of this essential commodity has, in fact, already doubled. The farm drainage network has also suffered considerable damage.

13. The cash crops for processing and export have also been sorely affected; 90 per cent of the plantations on the island of Sainte Marie, for example, have been ravaged, and the harvests of coffee, vanilla, cloves, lychees, etc., on the east coast are likely to be severely affected for several years to come.

14. The Malagasy Government, together with the National Aid Council and with the active participation of the population, reacted immediately by mobilizing all the available means in order to provide emergency aid and assistance to the victims.

15. In close liaison with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and thanks to the diligent action of several Member States, international governmental and non-governmental organizations and private associations, measures have begun with a view to ensuring that those affected are evacuated, sheltered and fed, as well as provided with emergency care, rations and other basic necessities.

16. The exceptional gravity of the damage, the overall assessment of which is currently under way, as well as its impact on the already precarious situation of the economy, which is undergoing complete restructuring, have led the Government to launch an urgent appeal to the international community to continue to provide, as a complement to national efforts, emergency aid and appropriate assistance in the subsequent process of recovery.

APPENDIX

Draft resolution: emergency assistance to Madagascar

The General Assembly,

Seriously concerned at the extensive damage and devastation caused by the tropical cyclones Daisy and Geralda and by the floods which have struck Madagascar,

Noting with concern the destruction of thousands of dwellings and the damage suffered by important sectors of the national infrastructure and the mounting needs of hundreds of thousands of persons affected,

Recognizing the efforts being exerted by the Malagasy Government in order to provide emergency aid and assistance to the victims of these disasters,

Noting that the resolute efforts of the Malagasy Government aimed at promoting growth and economic development will be hampered by this type of periodical natural disaster,

1. Declares its solidarity with the Malagasy Government and people in their affliction;

2. Notes with satisfaction the efforts being exerted by the Malagasy Government with a view to providing swift aid to the victims through its own means;

3. Commends the international community, including the bodies and organizations of the United Nations system, for the measures which it has taken in order to supplement the efforts of the Malagasy Government in the emergency aid and assistance operations;

4. Requests the Secretary-General, acting in cooperation with the competent bodies and organizations of the United Nations system and in close collaboration with the governmental authorities, to assist the Malagasy Government in bringing recovery efforts to a successful conclusion;

5. Requests all States and the international organizations to provide urgently additional support to Madagascar in order to mitigate the economic and financial burden which the Malagasy people will have to bear during the period of emergency and the subsequent process of recovery;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1994 on the implementation of the present resolution.

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Forty-eighth session

REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE AGENDA OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO UGANDA

Letter dated 25 February 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the forty-eighth session of the Assembly of an additional item of an urgent character entitled "Emergency assistance to Uganda".

Please find attached, in accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the texts of an explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution.

(Signed) Perezi K. KAMUNANWIRE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Explanatory memorandum

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Uganda is a least developed country that lies astride the equator between the latitudes of 4°30' north and 1°30' south, and the longitudes of 29°30' west and 33° east. Its western part forms part of the East African Rift Valley and is bounded by the Rwenzori mountains, popularly referred to as the Mountains of the Moon.

2. Disaster struck the western region on 6 February 1994, when an earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale devastated the three districts of Kabarole, Bundibugyo and Kasese. Its epicentre is believed to have been in Kisomoro, Bunyangabu county. Since the earthquake first struck, tremors continue to occur at regular intervals, exacerbating the trauma, panic and uncertainty in the region.

II. THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE

3. The death toll has so far been limited to eight victims. Nevertheless, the earthquake has dealt a devastating blow to the fragile infrastructure in this rural region, mercilessly damaging hospitals, primary health care centres, schools, roads, veterinary centres, prisons, administrative buildings, commercial buildings, places of religious worship and sites of cultural significance. It has left thousands of residents without shelter or food, left injured residents without access to health care and rendered accessibility to and communication with the area a truly onerous task. The cost of the damage is currently estimated at US$ 59 million. Efforts are under way to ascertain the short- and long-term impact of the earthquake.

4. In addition to the immediate impact on human life and settlements, the earthquake has had ominous environmental consequences that have yet to be fully charted. A crack in the Rwenzori mountains in Kisomoro district has resulted in the creation of a new river, which is gushing down the valley towards the settlements and agricultural land. There is a well-founded fear that this new river will flood the valley, creating a new lake and further displacing thousands of people. The famous hot springs in the region, hitherto a peaceful tourist attraction, now emit sky-high jets of red boiling water. Furthermore, massive land slides are expected once the rains begin.

5. It is clear that the earthquake will have an adverse impact on agriculture and tourism in the region.

III. RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS

6. Efforts have been made by the Government to address the emergency relief needs of the area. In this regard, non-governmental organizations, such as the Uganda Red Cross Society and OXFAM, and church organizations, such as the Pentecostal Church of Uganda and the Fort Portal Catholic Diocese, are playing an invaluable role.

7. A fact-finding mission of the Department of Disaster Relief and Resettlement of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is in the process of preparing a comprehensive assessment of the region's needs. The Government has requested the Department for Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat to assist in the areas of damage assessment, provision of relief and coordination of donor activities. A field agency mission on relief requirements is expected to report shortly.

8. Under the overall coordination of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, committees chaired by the respective District Administrators have been set up to coordinate relief efforts in the three affected districts.

IV. ASSISTANCE REQUIRED

9. On the basis of the initial assessment of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the areas in which urgent assistance is required include the provision of medicine, blankets and tents. Unipots (prefabricated metal huts) are urgently needed to serve as treatment rooms, storage facilities and office accommodations. Polythelene materials are required in the construction of temporary shelters. Wireless communications equipment is vital for communication between Kampala, the capital, and the disaster-struck area. Financial and logistical support to the coordinating team in the field will also be necessary. The Government of Uganda would also appreciate technical assistance in ascertaining the cause of the earthquake, as well as the extent of the damage, and in forecasting the geological future of the region.

10. In the light of the massive damage to infrastructure, the grave consequences for the environment and the incapacity of Uganda, a least developed country presently undertaking structural reform, to respond adequately to the crisis, the Government of Uganda is launching an urgent appeal for assistance from the international community. It is our ardent hope that this appeal for support to Uganda's national efforts at addressing the short-term relief and rehabilitation requirements, as well as the longer-term resettlement, recovery and development needs of the people of Kabarole, Bundibugyo and Kasese, will elicit a positive and prompt response.

Appendix

Draft resolution: emergency assistance to Uganda

The General Assembly,

Deeply concerned about the extensive damage and devastation caused by the major earthquake that recently struck western Uganda,

Noting with concern the urgent need to address the immediate relief requirements of thousands of residents in Kabarole, Bundibugyo and Kasese districts,

Bearing in mind the negative impact of the earthquake on development efforts and on the environment,

Recognizing the efforts by the Ugandan people and Government to respond to this crisis,

Conscious of the financial, organizational and technical constraints that have hampered these efforts,

Aware of the additional pressure on the infrastructure of Uganda resulting from increased inflows of refugees from neighbouring countries in recent years,

1. Declares its solidarity with the Government and people of Uganda in their affliction;

2. Notes with satisfaction the national efforts of Uganda to provide assistance to the victims of the earthquake;

3. Commends the international community, including the Department for Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, for the measures taken thus far in response to the disaster;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to assist the Government and people of Uganda in providing relief and bringing recovery efforts to a successful conclusion;

5. Requests all States and international organizations urgently to provide relief assistance to the victims of the disaster and to provide additional support to Uganda to enable the country to shoulder the additional socio-economic and financial burden resulting from the earthquake;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1994 on the implementation of the present resolution.